

Obey Statement During Floor Debate On The Jobs For Main Street Act □

December 16, 2009

Madam Speaker, when President Bush left office, we were losing over 700,000 jobs a month. We passed the economic recovery package, and we have gotten that down to about 11,000 jobs a month. That's not enough, but it's terrific progress.

I am somewhat bemused, however, by all of the comments by our friends on the minority side of the aisle denouncing the recovery package and saying that it didn't work. Not a single one of them voted for it on this House floor.

But if you check newspaper accounts around the country, you will see, for instance, that the minority leader, in a June 15 press statement, said that he was pleased that Federal officials stepped in and ordered Ohio to use all of its construction dollars for shovel-ready projects that will create much-needed jobs.

The minority whip vowed to shed partisan politics to help the economy. He met with transportation officials about how his home State of Virginia could apply for stimulus grants to build a rail line.

The minority chief deputy whip, in his own press release, outright praised the courthouse in his district receiving funds from the recovery package to build a new courthouse. He said, "I applaud this funding for the Bakersfield Federal courthouse."

My Republican colleague from New Jersey (Mr. Lance) announced by a press release that his district received \$13 million from the Recovery Act for local flood control projects. "This is outstanding news," he said. He even sent a letter to President Obama asking for speedy release of those recovery funds.

Another of our colleagues from Michigan on that side of the aisle issued a press release saying he was pleased to announce that his international airport would receive \$12.7 million from funds received by the Recovery Act.

Another of our colleagues on the minority side from Illinois said, "There is no question these grants will be of assistance in creating jobs."

I can go on and on and on citing Member after Member who denounced the bill on the House floor and then went home to their districts and issued grandiose press releases expressing their support for the results of the recovery package.

I have a little difficulty following that ping pong ball when it's bouncing on both sides of the table. I have a little difficulty following the folks on that side of the aisle when they decide to fall off both sides of the same horse. I wish you would make up your mind: which do we believe, your statements that you make at home or the statements and the votes you cast on this House floor?

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Madam Speaker, we have heard three times at least now our friends on the minority side indicate that only 12 percent of the original stimulus funding has, quote, "left the Treasury." That's a very slippery way to put it, because the fact is that what "left the Treasury" means is that after funds are obligated to those who will actually spend it, and after the bills have been paid by those recipients, then the money has, indeed, left the Treasury. The real term to focus on is what has been obligated. And the fact is that for the programs in this bill, 70 percent of the funds previously appropriated to those programs have already been obligated. So much for that argument.

Example, the minority press release states, "No funds out of the \$1 billion provided for COPS has left the Treasury." The fact is, all of that funding has been awarded.

The minority press release states, "Only \$235 million out of the \$6.4 billion for EPA wastewater grants has left the Treasury." The fact is, 99 percent of that funding has already been provided to the States. So much for that straw man.

Let me, Madam Speaker, simply make this observation: we have before us a bill that determines to redirect \$75 billion, which had initially been directed to help Wall Street, and we

want to, instead, redirect that money to help Main Street. So we provide \$27 billion, for instance, for highway infrastructure projects to put people back in construction. You're either for it or you're against it.

We have provided enough funding in this legislation to assist more than 670 communities address their growing backlog of water and sewer repairs and put people to work in the process. You're either for it or against it.

We've provided \$27 billion from Wall Street to Main Street to try to stabilize public service jobs. We're trying to preserve 250,000 teaching jobs over the next 2 years, for instance. You're either for doing that or you're against it.

We're trying to use \$500 million to preserve the jobs of thousands of firefighters all across the country. You are either going to help or you're not.

We are trying to provide 250,000 disadvantaged youth with summer employment opportunities. You're either going to help them or you're not.

We're trying to provide 250,000 students with additional college work study funds so they can stay in school. You're either going to help those students or you're not.

We're trying to provide funding for approximately 150,000 individuals in high-growth and emerging industry sectors where we know there are job growth possibilities. You're either going to help support that or not.

We are trying to provide unemployment insurance for 6 months rather than the 2-month extension that was in the previous bill today. You're either going to help those people or not.

We are trying to provide \$23 billion to extend the higher Federal match for payments to doctors, or we're not.

So, basically, it's about time to decide where you're coming from. An article in the New York Times today described what happens when you lose your job. It pointed out that more than half of the Nation's unemployed workers have had to borrow money from friends or relatives since losing their jobs. They've had to cut back on doctor visits. That same article indicates that a quarter of those polled had said they'd lost their home or been threatened with foreclosure. They also noted that half of the adults surveyed admitted to feeling embarrassed or ashamed as a result of being out of work. And nearly half of the respondents said they no longer had health insurance. The question is, are you going to help those people or not?

We can argue what our economic philosophy is until the cows come home, as they say in my area, but it seems to me that the question simply is, We've got a problem; what are you going to do about it?